

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 /090 W

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R 040825Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2307

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABIDJAN 2185

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EB, XF, XA, IV

SUBJECT: OAU/ARAB LEAGUE SUMMIT:

IVORY COAST VIEWS

1. IN COURSE OF GENERAL DISCUSSION YESTERDAY WITH FOREIGN MINISTER USHER, WHO LEAVES TODAY FOR CAIRO, I ASKED HIM WHAT IVORY COAST EXPECTED TO SEE EMERGE FROM OAU/ARAB LEAGUE SUMMIT. NOTING RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENT BY NIGERIAN EXTAFF COMMISSIONER GARBA EXPRESSING DISAPPOINTMENT WITH ARAB SUPPORT ON ISSUES OF PRIMARY INTEREST TO AFRICANS, I WONDERED WHETHER AFRICANS WERE LIKELY TO INCREASE PRESSURE ON ARABS IN CAIRO TO OBTAIN MORE TANGIBLE COMMITMENTS, ESPECIALLY ON SOUTHERN AFRICA.

2. USHER OBSERVED DRILY THAT THE IVORY COAST WAS LESS DISILLUSIONED WITH ARABS THAN SOME OTHER AFRICAN STATES BECAUSE IVORIANS HAD EXPECTED LESS. IN EXCHANGE FOR AFRICAN SUPPORT AGAINST ISRAEL--WHICH HAD COST AFRICAN STATES TANGIBLE BENEFITS--ARABS WERE DOING LITTLE
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MORE WITH RESPECT TO SOUTHERN AFRICAN PROBLEM THAN THEY HAD BEEN DOING BEFORE. "WE HAVE SEEN WHAT THEY CAN DO WHEN THEY WANT TO," SAID USHER, "AND WE KNOW WHAT THEIR RESOURCES ARE." HE THOUGHT THERE WOULD BE AN EFFORT IN CAIRO TO EXTRACT MORE HELP FROM ARABS, BUT HE ALSO DOUBTED THAT MUCH WOULD COME OF IT.

3. I ASKED USHER WHETHER HE MIGHT NOT HIMSELF BE EXPOSED TO SOME PRESSURE IN CAIRO DUE TO HOUPHOUET'S WELL-PUBLICIZED MEETING WITH RABINS IN GENEVA. HE SHRUGGED THIS OFF, SAYING THAT IVORIANS HAD DONE NOTHING MORE THAN PROVIDE GOOD OFFICES TO BOTH SIDES. HOUPHOUET HAD MET WITH PALESTINIANS AND ISRAELIS AND HAD REPORTED POSITIONS OF BOTH TO DIRECTLY CONCERNED PARTIES "WITHOUT EDITORIAL COMMENT." USHER THOUGHT THAT ARABS KNEW THAT HOUPHOUET HAD NO AXE TO GRIND IN MIDDLE EAST AND WAS SIMPLY INTERESTED IN FACILITATING DIALOGUE AMONG PARTIES TO MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT. HOUPHOUET BELIEVED THERE WAS AT LONG LAST SOME REASON TO BELIEVE THAT SETTLEMENT WAS POSSIBLE AND HIS "MODEST DIPLOMACY" IN GENEVA AND PARIS WAS DESIGNED TO NUDGE THE PROCESS ALONG.

4. COMMENT: IVORIANS--PARTICULARLY HOUPHOUET--CONTINUE TO BE UNCOMFORTABLE ABOUT AFRO-ARAB TOGETHERNESS, BELIEVING THAT IT TENDS TO STRENGTHEN RADICAL AFRICANS MORE THAN MODERATES AND IN SO DOING INDIRECTLY ENHANCES SOVIET INFLUENCE IN AFRICA. WHILE HOUPHOUET'S DISCOMFORT IS UNLIKELY TO INSPIRE HIM TO GET OUT IN FRONT OF HIS WEST AFRICAN NEIGHBORS IN REESTABLISHING FORMAL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL, HE WILL CERTAINLY CONTINUE TO LOOK FOR WAYS TO DEMONSTRATE HIS EVEN-HANDEDNESS AND THEREBY TO FREE HIS HANDS TO DEAL WITH ISRAELIS, AS WELL AS ARABS, ON PRAGMATIC BASIS HE FAVORS. STEARNS

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